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11-11-1940

### Letter, Virginia Brainard to Dudley, Merl Brainard and family [November 11, 1940]

Virginia Brainard

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Roberts Hall  
Iowa State College  
Ames, Iowa  
Nov. 11, 1940

Dear Mother and Daddy and family,

Thank you so very very much for the grand letter. I do want to do everything possible to please you and to do what you want me to and I'm working just as hard as I possibly can so please stick by me on this. I can get an "A" in Journalism and I think a "B" in Speech. I'm afraid I won't be able to go much higher there because I'm handicapped by my speaking voice. It's too small and hasn't enough volume behind it. I need more tone variety ~~behind it~~, too. All my Speech criticisms from the class say they can't hear me or understand me. So I had a talk with my instructor Friday after my last Speech. I guess there isn't much that can be done about it because I have so little volume but I'm going to work on tone variety and enunciation and he's going to sit in the back of the room and keep shouting at me if he can't hear. I must really work on that because it's important to me in my work.

I'm very surprised that Chemistry fascinates me the way it does! Tell Dr. Betty that! I thought I'd hate it but I'm crazy about it! However, it's very hard for me so I don't know how I'll come out in the end. Textiles and Clothing is the one course I don't like! I'm not getting anywhere in it and I can't seem to grasp it, learn it!

Thanks so much for my allowance. It came just in time. And so did my winter coat. We're having the worst blizzard today that I've ever been in. The wind is just roaring in from the plains <sup>west</sup> south of the college and the campus has so many wide sweeps ~~and it~~ that the force of the wind isn't broken. It's terrible. I've never been so cold in my life! The snow is just drifted all over the side-walks and ~~streets~~ that my feet are soaked all the time. I need over-shoes and a heavy pair of socks - just the pants. They let us wear them around here and they're the only way to keep warm. Anything else is too bulky and can't be worn because we ~~don't~~ don't have any lockers ~~in~~ - except in the Home Ec. building & I have only one class there - and so we have to have our wraps around with us all the time. I have a long hike across the campus between every class. Do you want me to save



the \$3.80 for Cedar Rapids out of this month's allowance? Or will it come out of my regular board and room expenses being as how I'd use the same amount ~~to stay here~~ plus about \$1.50 more to stay here? Please let me know what to do because then I'll be able to figure out if I can afford over shoes and those slacks this month. Anyway you want me to handle it, it's perfectly O.K. with me so — just hand me out the orders!

Daddy, please write me a long letter and tell me what you think of the third-term election. Now I wish I could have been home to listen to the election returns with you. The dorm got special permission to have our radios on all night and so we glued ourselves to the radio. I gave up about 12:45 ~~and~~ and went to bed but the rest stuck it out altho the outcome was just about assured by that time. Now what's going to happen? What effect is this going to have on the United States as the European War question? And what about our domestic affairs? What effect will it have on national unity?

Here at college everything — our world — seems so safe and secure. Nothing has changed. Oh, we talk and argue politics and try to settle the world's problems, of course, just like everyone else, but it's like arguing about next week's Chemistry assignments. It all seems so far away and nothing that directly concerns us at the present anyhow. Everything goes on the same. We don't feel any world shattering crises or any approach of grim and inevitable doom. Oh, one day several weeks ago the fellows went over to the Union and registered for the draft. And now quite a few of them will be knocking a gear off — beginning next June — to go into what seems just like camping only on a larger scale. But there isn't any sudden exodus of the male population, no "flaming youth" "gayety" — you know, "live today for tomorrow we die" or something like that. Everything goes on as usual and no one even seems to care a hoot about next year. Well, maybe I should talk to more people about it but everything seems to me to be very unexcitingly normal.

Edward took me over to see Aunt Julia before she left Ames. She looked much better than I expected her to look. We had a swell talk and it seemed so good to see her again. She's just the same as ever. At least



It doesn't seem to have done much to her vitality! Cousin Mary says that it was hard to keep up her morale, tho'. Aw gee, thanks so much for letting me go to Cedar Rapids for Thanksgiving. I'll be glad to get away for a few days with everyone else go, too, and I'll need to let down and rest for awhile there so I can get in condition for finals which come the week before Christmas vacation. We're trying to get a ride at least one way so chances are it'll cost even less.

I'm getting so behind in things. Not my work but everything else. I owe letters right and left and yesterday was Chuckie's birthday and I haven't even written him at all or Ned. I'm answering Eleanor's letter, tho'. But my clothes are always dirty and pilling up on me all the time!! I never have time to fix them and I've worn my brown & white checked shirt steadily for two solid weeks now. I just get up in the morning and throw it on and anything that'll go with it. I can't get any wear out of my suits now cause the jackets are too bulky to go under my coats which I have to wear constantly. I'd like to get another sweater or two but can't afford it nor a new brown shirt because my other one has split out at the seams. I'll have to wait until next month I guess. Maybe I can hold out until Christmas. One thing we should have invested in and let a lot of other things go is a reversible. I haven't needed anything so badly down here as I've needed that. It rains for a week at a time and I go around for just drenched all the time. The water gets in here the soles of my old shoes. I wish I could have a zipper put in my winter coat. It won't stay buttoned and stands out straight behind me in a stiff yoke like day!! But I'm getting along.

I'm enclosing ~~the~~ that picture taken when I gained weight. Can you notice it, I hope? And will you please send me the pictures we took the last Sunday I was home? This one was taken on the front porch of Roberts near the front door.

My laundry box is going out tomorrow morning



Don't about enclosing a cake on the return trip, by  
please? I get so hungry I nearly pass out and by  
the time I get down to dinner I'm so hungry it hurts  
and then I can't eat.

Please don't read this next to the rest of the family.  
You and I have never talked it over or mentioned it  
much in any way but it's presented itself as a new problem  
and I'm not sure I like it or know how to handle it. It is  
about my "social adjustments" you wrote about in your  
last letter — and developing a well-rounded personality.  
I have a feeling I'm standing still. I'm not developing  
at all. I'm just standing still. I want to be a so much  
better person than I am and I want to throw out my  
faults and start all over again and be a person that's worth-  
while in ~~every~~ every way. But ~~the~~ personality is so  
abstract I just can't get anywhere. I know what I want  
to be but I don't know how to be it or rather, ~~to~~ I know  
what I want to do to be it but it's another to actually do it.  
I know it's inside me — the really worthwhile part, the  
genuine part — but I can't bring it out. I can't stop  
being superficial or artificial (or what have you). I  
can't be real anymore. I've gone around so long with  
my head in the clouds that I don't know how to be  
down-to-earth. I've lived in the future so much —  
"tomorrow I'll be doing this! I can hardly wait!" —  
that I don't know how to get the very fullest enjoyment  
out of the present and so I waste it and then after  
it's gone, regret that I didn't make the most of it while  
I had it. What shall I do? I think my standards or maybe  
values are too superficial. I mean, I don't even know  
how to enjoy things — everything. I like just certain things  
and everything else bores me. I am not at all well-  
rounded. Oh, I have dates and I go out and I usually  
don't have a particularly good time. ~~But~~ I always make my  
date have a good time but I rarely do. They're all nice fellows  
but nobody I care much about. I wouldn't want to marry  
any one of them. But what do I want? I know the kind  
of fellows I want to know as worthwhile friends but  
they're not coming my way. I need help. We've never  
talked about anything important to me along this line  
before — it's always been my work. But that's only a small  
part of it and this is far more important to me at the  
moment. Please write me, both of you. Love, Virginia